

POSTCARD FROM JAPAN

Hope for a SAFER tomorrow

TOKYO, Sendai City, Japan: **A**LONG THE banks of Arakawa River in Tokyo, a group of people are huddled together as they listen to Minoru Igarashi's instructions on colour coding for garbage separation and safety.



Amitabh Sharma

CONTRIBUTOR

The group, employees of a local company, gathered to clean up the banks of the river, assisted by Arakawa Clean-Aid Forum, a Tokyo-based non-government organisation.

"We are working for a common cause: to clean the river bank," said Natsuyuki Fujimori, a 20-year-old, who is one of the five full-time employees of the NGO.

Fujimori, who chose environmental protection over a corporate job, said that their team organised 159 cleaning exercises in 2015 and collected 5,602 bags of garbage – including from PET bottles, shoes, cans, baseball and tennis balls, tyres, and insulin syringes.

It is a collective and community exercise. The NGO, to fund its operations, organises cleaning exercises for companies that have environment protection as their corporate social responsibility mandate.

Groups spend a couple of hours on a weekend afternoon collecting garbage, filling out a questionnaire, and getting edu-

cated on the impact of various kinds of garbage on the environment and the food chain.

"Today's lesson," Fujimori said, "is on plastic micro pellets and the food cycle. The fish eat these pellets and these are the same fish we end up eating, with toxins in their system."

The group, after the conclusion of the cleaning exercise, got together and pumped their fists in unison for a job well done. It was a community and collective effort.

Around 300 kilometres, north of Tokyo, at the Shichigo Elementary School in Sendai City, 33 grade two students jumped and crouched under their desks in unison as their teacher, Atsuko Kamata, gave a command. This is part of their disaster-preparedness lesson, and today, they were learning about what to do in the event of an earthquake.

"Disaster preparedness is part of our curriculum and we have allocated 30 hours in the year for grade one and two and 35 hours in the year for grade three and above," shared Masaki Nakatsuji, vice-principal of the



PHOTOS BY AMITABH SHARMA

Today's lesson is ... Natsuyuki Fujimori gives a presentation on effects of garbage on the river's ecosystem.



Grade 4 students of Shichigo Elementary School, Sendai, attend a disaster preparedness class

school. The school is developing a national curriculum on disaster preparedness based on its first-hand experiences with the deadly earthquake and tsunami that left more than 20,000 people dead in Sendai and surrounding regions.

NOT A CHORE

The grade two students were

divided in groups as they studied a poster with a photo of their route, on which they had to give their input on how they would react and save themselves if an earthquake struck. "I will run to a safe location and hide there," said one student. Her classmate added, "I will run away from the danger."

"Prevention is better than

cure', an adage that the Shichigo Elementary School recognises and follows, the institution has got the parents and community involved in the exercise to maximise the benefits of the programme. From assisting in teaching students about safety practices, to cleaning the school compound, duty is pride, not a chore.

In a grade four class, students filled out worksheets on the importance of protecting themselves at all times and being aware of their surroundings, and each had their recommendations. "These exercises," Nakatsuji said, "are an integral part of the school's curriculum, and especially after the

March 2011 Tsunami, we are giving more emphasis to disaster preparedness and management."

The tsunami, which unleashed nature's fury on the human existence, was an act of God; but the laughter of the children at the elementary school and youngsters like Fujimori are a reassurance that God gives us hope, and the next generation is ready take care of their planet, for we have not inherited this Earth from our ancestors, but merely borrowed it from our children.

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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FOUND A WAY

Both vulnerable, South deals.

NORTH
 ♠ K Q 8 5 2
 ♥ J 4
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ Q 9 6 4

WEST
 ♠ 10 9 7 6 3
 ♥ Q 9 8 6 5
 ♦ K 10
 ♣ A

EAST
 ♠ Void
 ♥ 10 3
 ♦ Q J 8 4 2
 ♣ K J 10 8 7 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A J 4
 ♥ A K 7 2
 ♦ 9 7 6 5
 ♣ 5 2

The bidding:
 SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass
 INT Pass 3NT All pass

Opening lead: Six of ♥

North-South did well to avoid the ill-fated contract of four spades. Nine tricks in no trump are also far from certain, but South was off to a good start when West chose the reasonable lead of a low heart. Dummy's jack won the first trick, as East played his low heart. That low heart play by East was not an error, but it left West uncertain as to who held the 10. That looked like nine tricks in the bag, but declarer had to dig deep

when East showed out on the first spade. To make his contract, South would have to find a way to end-play West. Declarer reasoned that West couldn't have too many minor suit cards with his known length in the majors, and he set out to exhaust them by leading a low club toward the queen. West won with the ace and had to decide how to continue. He couldn't lead a spade and he was afraid that declarer might have the 10 of hearts. A heart continuation was essential, but West didn't know it. He tried the king of diamonds instead, and continued with his last diamond to dummy's ace when South allowed him to hold the lead.

South now led a spade to his jack and another spade. West was forced to split his ten-nine and dummy won with the queen. A heart to the ace, followed by the king and another heart, and declarer had found a way to end-play West. West could cash another heart, but had to lead away from his ten-seven of spades, allowing South to take the marked finesse in dummy.

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001. E-mail responses may be sent to tcaditors@tribpub.com.)



Segregated and packed ... notice the caricature on the bag ... that's the mascot of the local government for garbage bags

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R.S.V.P.: The Principal P.O. Box 556 Brown's Town, St. Ann
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